



November 17, 2016

Dr. Salam Noor  
Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Oregon Department of Education

Dear Dr. Noor:

The leadership and membership of the Oregon Library Association (OLA), the Oregon Association of School Libraries (OASL), and the Oregon Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL-Oregon) believe strong school library programs are a key factor in moving education forward under ESSA. Strong school library programs include:

- **Certified teacher librarians** who are collaborative teaching partners and leaders in professional development;
- **Library support staff** who create and maintain full access to the library resources for all;
- **Collections** that provide equitable access to resources and content appealing to a wide range of learners and supporting teaching across the curriculum.

To develop our state's ESSA Implementation Plan, we respectfully recommend the following policies to ODE.

### **Accountability**

Certified teacher librarians are uniquely poised to help transform schools. Strong library programs and teacher librarians are guided by rubrics that include teacher collaboration and professional development for staff. This cooperative teaching approach strengthens and reinforces student learning and supports teacher growth and development. Schools with strong library programs support the transformation of learning in a digital environment.

As ESSA requires statewide accountability, we recommend that:

- ODE endorse and promote the rubric that defines and measures effective school library programs (forthcoming from OASL in summer 2017);
- All districts implement the rubric to assess the health of their school libraries.

### **District and School Improvement**

Teacher librarians work throughout their school and acquire intimate knowledge of their campus. They can assist in determining local needs for block grants and can see where departments, grade levels, and other divisions within a district can leverage partnerships to increase impact on instruction and student achievement.

Teacher librarians attend conferences and workshops off campus and bring back what they learned to other professionals. This professional development role equips teacher librarians to see and apply the benefits of new techniques, strategies, and technologies to entire campuses, not

just one department or classroom. Students, teachers, and administrators have specific needs, and teacher librarians keep them all up-to-date on emerging technology and resources.

As ODE considers ways to ensure that every student receives a rounded, rigorous, and relevant education, we recommend that ODE:

- Encourage teacher librarians to participate in development of building- and district-level assessment plans focused on student achievement.
- Direct use of federal education dollars through Title programs toward specific opportunities including:
  - Applying for Innovative Approaches to Literacy funds on behalf of high-needs school districts to help them fully realize the academic gains of an effective school library program;
  - Utilizing Title IV, Part A funds reserved for SEAs to hire a school library position at ODE to support grant writing and program implementation statewide.

### **Educator Effectiveness**

Certified teacher librarians directly support teachers and classroom instruction. This includes co-teaching, developing culturally-responsive collections, and providing professional resources, equipment, supplies, and materials. These factors in turn enhance classroom learning, collaboration, teacher mentorship, and special programming such as community speakers and author events to connect teachers and students to literacy and their community.

Teacher librarians are trained to select culturally-responsive, diverse, and grade-appropriate materials into the curriculum. Consequently, the library provides a collection that reflects the diversity of the school's students and teachers and supports the Oregon Equity Plan.

As ODE considers ways to best integrate the goals of the Equitable Access to Educator Plan into the ESSA Implementation Plan, we recommend that ODE:

- Direct federal Title program funds toward specific opportunities including:
  - Supporting professional development of all library staff with Title II, Part A funds;
  - Using Title II, Part B, Subpart 2, section 226 funds to assist high-needs schools with up-to-date materials and professional development for teacher librarians.
- Support recruitment and ongoing professional development for school library staff by:
  - Increasing ODE's excellent professional development work through community colleges, cohort studies, and webinars;
  - Expanding the Read Oregon endorsement to include a teacher librarian track;
  - Encouraging regional cohorts through ESDs, with special focus on recruiting teacher librarians of color as well as those interested in working in rural Oregon.
- Help develop an evaluation instrument specific to teacher librarians.

### **Standards and Assessment**

As noted above, teacher librarians routinely work across the curriculum and are familiar with a wide range of content standards. These include CCSS and NGSS, which emphasize research and technology skills, and the Oregon School Library Standards that address the systematic teaching of information literacy. Teacher librarians work with students for multiple years, supporting inquiry-based learning and consistency in research, digital citizenship, and literacy skills. The Oregon School Library Standards can help districts create and evaluate school library programs that support teachers and students to improve achievement and accomplish ESSA's goals.

As ODE considers how to create, implement, and measure challenging academic standards, we recommend that ODE:

- Promote the Oregon School Library Standards that were adopted by the State Board of Education in January 2015;
- Adopt the grade-level indicators developed to support the Oregon School Library Standards (forthcoming from OASL in summer 2017);
- Create a path for consistent implementation and integration of the Oregon School Library Standards by certified teacher librarians.

### **Supporting Effective School Libraries Supports Student Achievement**

Strong school libraries and teacher librarians are integral for a student's education. In the 2016 compendium, *School Libraries Work*, multiple studies demonstrated how effective school library programs and certified teacher librarians help student achievement through higher reading levels and test scores. More than sixty studies in two dozen states showed that school library funding levels, teacher librarian staffing levels, the adequacy of both print and digital collections, and the instructional role of the teacher librarian had a direct impact on student achievement.

The Oregon library community is ready to work with ODE to carry out the recommendations above as part of the ESSA Implementation Plan, making them an expectation for schools statewide. By collaborating with teacher librarians and other partners in statewide planning sessions, ODE can help create, develop, and maintain effective school library programs that foster digital literacy skills and academic achievement. Low income and minority students benefit most from the instruction and guidance of teacher librarians and equitable access to the high quality, professionally-curated resources.

Access to good school libraries and teacher librarians should not depend on how much money a student's family has, the color of their skin, or where they live. With ODE's help, OASL envisions equitable access to strong school libraries for every student throughout the state by including school libraries in the state's ESSA Implementation Plan.

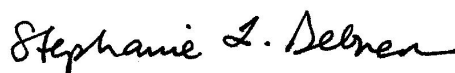
Sincerely,



Elsa Loftis  
OLA President 2016-17



Peggy Christensen  
OASL President 2016-17



Stephanie Debner  
ACRL-Oregon President 2016-17

cc: Dawne Huckaby, Assistant Superintendent, ODE Office of Teaching and Learning  
Charles R. Martinez, Jr., Chair, Oregon State Board of Education  
Anthony Veliz, Vice-Chair, Oregon State Board of Education  
George Russell, Oregon State Board of Education  
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